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DEPARTMENT FOR DS/IP/EAP AND DS/TIA/ITA

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SUBJECT: SECURITY ENVIRONMENT PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRE (SEPQ)
- SPRING 2009

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Classified By: RSO Gregory J. Levin, Reason 1.4(c)

[1](#)1. (SBU) The following responses are keyed to reftel and cleared by Seoul's Core Emergency Action Committee:

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

[1](#)I. Demonstrations

[1](#)A. (C) Are there any ethnic or religious communities in-country prone to carrying out significant anti-American demonstrations? Please describe.

No specific ethnic or religious communities in the country have carried out significant anti-American demonstrations, although representatives of certain Christian and Buddhist groups have participated in anti-American demonstrations related to U.S. policy toward North Korea. The Embassy cannot exclude the possibility of significant anti-American demonstrations by the Islamic community in Korea, depending on future developments in the Middle East and elsewhere. Police advise that there are 140,000 nationals from Middle-Eastern and North African countries and 8000 Pakistanis currently residing in South Korea. Most of them are factory workers. The local police and intelligence services keep a close watch over their movements and activities. The Grand Central Mosque located in the Itaewon neighborhood of Seoul is within walking distance of the Yongsan U.S. Army Garrison and U.S. Embassy housing.

i. (SBU) Have there been anti-American demonstrations in the country within the last 12 months? If yes, please describe.

Yes. There were approximately 180 anti-American demonstrations in Seoul over the past twelve months (Note: The Korean National Police classify candlelight vigils as religious events and not demonstrations. If Post were to include anti-American candlelight vigils, the total number would be 260). Although typically small in scale, averaging 30-50 people, the demonstrations encompassed a broad range of issues, including but not limited to Six-Party talks, U.S. military forces in Korea, the war in Iraq and the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA). During the spring and summer of 2008, there were large-scale protests against the importation of U.S. beef into Korea. This last issue however, has basically disappeared and the Embassy does not foresee the resumption of anti-U.S. beef protests.

ii. (SBU) Have anti-American demonstrations taken place near or in front of U.S. diplomatic facilities? If yes, please describe.

Yes. There were approximately 150 anti-American demonstrations occurring within the city blocks of the U.S. Embassy in Seoul.

iii. (SBU) What is the average size of an anti-American demonstration?

The average size of demonstrations was 30-50 participants. During the anti-U.S. beef demonstrations, however, participants sometimes averaged in the tens of thousands.

iv. (SBU) Are anti-American demonstrations usually triggered by U.S. foreign policy initiatives, military actions, or by domestic issues?

The trigger for most anti-American demonstrations was usually related to the presence of U.S. military forces in Korea. There are several incidents, including the tragic death of two school girls in an accident in June 2002 involving U.S. military vehicles and the January 2007 brutal rape of a 67-year old woman by a U.S. service member, that triggered anti-American demonstrations. The importation of U.S. beef into Korea also became a flashpoint for large-scale anti-American demonstrations in 2008.

1B. (SBU) Are demonstrations generally violent or peaceful?

Some anti-U.S. beef demonstrations have resulted in violent confrontations with local police. At the height of the nightly protests, close to 150,000 participants held protests throughout the night, and into the next morning. Most violent clashes occurred after midnight and were thought to be instigated by the more politically active and aggressive groups. Participants flooded the downtown streets and blocked traffic for hours at a time. Police deployed additional riot control officers, usually outnumbering the protestors three-to-one, and water cannons to discourage the protestors. The Police also built temporary barricades to prevent groups from marching through the downtown corridor of Seoul. In response, protest groups damaged and defaced police buses that were positioned as barricades. There were several reports of both police and protestors being injured in the confrontations. Police also reported that protest organizers and violent instigators were arrested.

i. (SBU) Have violent demonstrations resulted in damage to USG property or injuries to USG employees? If yes, please describe.

No, not in recent years.

ii. (SBU) Have violent demonstrators ever penetrated our perimeter security line? If yes, please describe.

Yes, but not in recent years.

11. In October 2002, ten members of radical student groups formed a human ladder and quickly scaled the west wall of the Chancery perimeter. One student got on top of the cement awning over the Embassy entrance and unsuccessfully attempted to burn the American flag with a homemade torch.

12. In March 2003, four members of a group of some 30 radical students succeeded in scaling the top of the front wall of the Embassy Chancery. Two of the protesters gained access to the Compound and were subdued by the Embassy's local guards.

13. On August 4, 2003, 13 radical students breached the perimeter at the USFK Rodriguez Firing Range and staged a surprise anti-American, anti-war protest opposing military exercises by the U.S. Stryker Brigade Combat Team. The group burned an American flag after climbing onto a U.S. armored vehicle. Korean National Police officers arrested all the students.

1C. Have any anti-government demonstrations taken place in the country within the last 12 months?

Yes.

i. (SBU) Have any anti-government demonstrations taken place

near or in front of U.S. diplomatic facilities? If yes, please describe.

Yes, many demonstrations have taken place in the vicinity of the U.S. Embassy (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is across a major thoroughfare and is a frequent venue for demonstrations). Korean law prohibits demonstrations within 100 meters of a diplomatic facility. The ROKG interprets the intent of this law, however, to mean that demonstrations within 100 meters of diplomatic facilities should be prohibited only if the target of the demonstration is the diplomatic facility. At times, the police have allowed demonstrations within the 100 meter range as long as the target of the demonstrations was a nearby Korean Ministry, and not the Embassy.

ii. (SBU) What is the average size of an anti-government demonstration?

Anti-ROKG demonstrations include on average from 30-50 participants. Many of the large-scale demonstrations reported in earlier sections which began as protests against the importation of U.S. beef have also evolved into anti-ROKG demonstrations. Several protests reached 150,000 participants.

iii. (SBU) Are demonstrations generally violent or peaceful? Generally peaceful but violence has occurred between demonstrators and the police.

iv. (SBU) Have any demonstrations resulted in damage to USG property? If yes, please describe.

No, not in recent years.

II. Macro Conflict Conditions

1A. (SBU) Is the host country engaged in an interstate or intrastate conflict? (This may include battles between organized and violent drug cartels.) If yes, please provide a brief synopsis.

While there has been no full-scale armed conflict since the signing of the Armistice in 1953 that halted fighting in the Korean War, tensions have been heightened at times due to border crossing violations in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and in the Yellow Sea. Seoul is located only 40 kilometers from the DMZ, one of the most militarily fortified regions in the world. The DMZ is a reflection of the continuing armed truce on the Korean peninsula in the absence of a formal peace treaty. North Korea's October 2006 detonation of a nuclear device, and its earlier withdrawal from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) have raised fears over the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Northeast Asia. The U.S., along with the ROK, Japan, China and Russia, are working to resolve the DPRK nuclear issue through the Six-Party Talks.

Although North Korea has half the population of the ROK, it maintains the world's fifth-largest military, the third-largest standing army, and the world's largest special operations forces. The bulk of its forces are deployed near the DMZ. Seoul is well within the range of North Korean artillery and rockets. North Korea has the capability to inflict serious damage on Seoul within the first few hours of a conflict. In addition to substantial numbers of infantry and armored troops with conventional weapons, the Korean People's Army (KPA) also has the ability to strike with chemical munitions.

1B. (SBU) If an intrastate conflict, is it an insurgency limited to a specific region or is it a countrywide civil war?

The 1953 Armistice which brought a cease-fire to the Korean War is still in effect. There is no ongoing warfare or insurgency.

1C. (SBU) If limited to a specific region, are any U.S. diplomatic facilities located in this region? If so, where?

N/A.

1D. (SBU) Have any of the factions involved in intrastate conflicts signaled or demonstrated an anti-American orientation? If yes, please provide a brief synopsis.

There are certain minority groups, primarily radical university students, labor unions, and a small labor party in South Korea who sympathize with North Korea. These groups try to incite anti-American sentiments among the ROK public. Most Koreans, however, remain pro-American in their political and social outlook.

III. Host country Capabilities

1. (S/NF) Overview of South Korea's intelligence and police services:

The National Intelligence Service (NIS), a civilian organization, is the country's premier intelligence service. The NIS serves a dual role of collecting and analyzing both foreign and domestic intelligence. Its foreign intelligence responsibilities include the collection and analysis of political, economic, and industrial intelligence. In the past, these activities were focused largely on North Korea, but since the 1997 Asian economic crisis, the NIS has also undertaken industrial espionage, and collected economic, scientific and technical intelligence in an effort to ensure South Korea's competitiveness in the world market.

The National Police Agency (NPA) is a national law enforcement organization with strong intelligence collection capabilities. The NPA collects domestic intelligence on political opposition groups and is charged with taking police action to maintain national stability. NPA activities include monitoring pro-North Korean groups, supporting counter-intelligence, counter-espionage, counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism efforts and combating illegal immigration.

The NPA was established in 1948 as the Korean National Police (KNP). The name was changed to the National Police Agency in September 1991. The NPA employs approximately 150,000 personnel, including approximately 40,000 in the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency (SMPA) and 50,000 non-career personnel who fulfill their military obligation by serving in the NPA. Non-career personnel tend to be assigned to riot control, traffic control, and crime prevention. The NPA also assigns a very limited number of its officers to police attache positions in ROK embassies abroad (in the U.S., China, Japan, Russia, Brazil, France and the Philippines). The NPA is composed of 11 functional bureaus at its headquarters (near the U.S. Embassy in downtown Seoul), 13 district agencies, and the Maritime Police Agency. The NPA's Foreign Affairs Bureau serves as its liaison office with foreign missions in Korea.

The Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency is the largest district agency within the NPA structure and operates with a high degree of autonomy. The SMPA deals with more than one-half of South Korea's law enforcement issues. The SMPA is composed of six functional divisions, including Foreign Affairs which is responsible for the security of foreign embassies and personnel in the Seoul area.

The Defense Security Command (DSC) is charged with monitoring and neutralizing subversive elements in the ROK military services. Specifically, DSC collects intelligence on personnel and factions in the ROK military which threaten to undermine the ruling political administration's authority and the stability of the country. The DSC's jurisdiction and responsibilities often overlap and conflict with that of the NIS, although the NIS has the authority to be the lead agency

in any national security-related investigations. The DSC was established in 1977, and reorganized in 1991 and again in 1998. Although technically subordinate to the Ministry of National Defense (MND), the Commanding General of DSC operates semi-autonomously and typically has direct access to the President. The DSC has a Defense Security Unit (DSU) permanently assigned to the Yongsan Base (Headquarters of U.S. Forces Korea and the U.S. Eighth Army), to possibly monitor the activities of ROK troops assigned to the Combined Forces Command (CFC). The DSC employs approximately 4,500 personnel.

1A. (SBU) Are law enforcement agencies professional and well-trained? Please describe.

The National Police Agency (NPA) is cooperative, professional and well trained.

1B. (SBU) Have they been trained by U.S. agencies? If so, please elaborate on effectiveness of training.

The U.S. has provided training to the NPA. Relevant U.S. law enforcement agencies consider the training to be very effective.

1C. (SBU) Are law enforcement agencies confronted with serious, widespread corruption inside their agencies? Please describe.

Korean law enforcement agencies have experienced very serious corruption scandals over the past couple of years. In 2006, the Korean National Police Agency's Deputy Commissioner General resigned over allegations of taking bribes from a lobbyist who was involved in money laundering schemes. Also in 2006, two Superintendents General and various rank-and-file of the KNPA resigned after they were exposed for involvement in bribery schemes.

That said, at the street level, crime is very low in Seoul and Korea overall. Seoul is one of the safest large cities in the world.

1D. (SBU) Are the intelligence services professional and capable of deterring terrorist actions?

Yes, the National Intelligence Service (NIS) is highly trained and capable.

1E. (S/NF) Have the intelligence services been cooperative with U.S. Embassy requests for information and support?

The NIS is usually cooperative in responding to the U.S. Embassy's requests for terrorist-related information. It is less forthcoming, however, in providing information in other areas.

1F. (SBU) Assuming there have been significant terrorist threats in recent years, have host country security services been able to score any major anti-terrorism successes? If yes, please describe.

South Korea hosted Under-17 Men's World Cup matches in 2007, Women's World Cup Soccer games in 2007, World University Games in 2003 and the World Cup soccer matches in 2002 without any major incidents. The NIS and NPA effectively controlled demonstrations and security related incidents.

1G. (SBU) Has host country been responsive (re: timeliness and allocation of resources) to U.S. Embassy requests for protective security? If no, please elaborate.

Yes.

1H. (S/NF) How does the Embassy assess the overall security at major airports in the country? (excellent; very good; good/average; poor) If poor, please elaborate.

Excellent. Korean immigration authorities have appropriate

data collection and retrieval systems as well as adequate control of passengers entering and departing Korea. The ROK Immigration Bureau has recently implemented a new entry/exit data system that captures facial images from the biographical page of passports. The ROK's Immigration Bureau has no statutory authority in the international transit area of its international airports and seaports. Alien smugglers, immigration violators and other criminals are not currently prosecuted for crimes committed in the transit areas. There is a bill before the National Assembly to prosecute immigration violators. The U.S., Canada and Australia have access to the international transit area to monitor outbound flights. Korean Immigration authorities facilitate daily transit area access for U.S. officials. Korean Immigration authorities cooperate with U.S. Department of Homeland Security officials engaged in flight monitoring activities by providing access passes, forensic document examinations, and removal of immigration violators.

1I. (SBU) How effective are customs and immigration control agencies? (effective; average; ineffective) If ineffective, please elaborate.

Effective. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security oversees the Container Security Initiative (CSI) program in Busan. CSI is a partnership with other governments to identify high-risk cargo containers and to pre-screen them for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) before they are shipped to the United States. South Korea's major port, Busan, is the fifth largest port in the world, and one of the largest transit hubs in Asia. The CSI team began working with the Korean Customs Service in August 2003.

1J. (SBU) How effective are border patrol forces? (effective; average; ineffective) If ineffective, please elaborate.

The Korean Immigration Service does not have a land border patrol force. The Republic of Korea's only land border, the DMZ, is effectively closed.

INDIGENOUS TERRORISM: ANTI-AMERICAN TERRORIST GROUPS

1I. Anti-American Terrorist Groups

1A. (SBU) Are there indigenous, anti-American terrorist groups in-country? If yes, how many? Please name groups.

No.

1B. (SBU) Have groups carried out lethal anti-American attacks within the last 12 months? If yes, please describe.

No.

1C. (SBU) Were there any other anti-American attacks? If yes, please describe.

None.

1D. (SBU) Have groups attacked U.S. diplomatic targets? If yes, please describe.

No.

1E. (SBU) Have groups attacked U.S. business, U.S. military, or U.S.-related targets? If yes, please describe.

No.

1F. (SBU) Have groups limited their attacks to specific regions or do they operate country-wide?

N/A.

1G. (SBU) If attacks are limited to regions, are there any U.S. diplomatic facilities located in these regions? If so,

where?

N/A.

II. Other Indigenous Terrorist Groups

1A. (SBU) Are there other indigenous terrorist groups (not anti-American) in-country? If yes, how many? Please name groups.

No.

1B. (SBU) Have groups carried out attacks in the capital or in areas where U.S. diplomatic facilities are located? If so, how close?

No.

1C. (SBU) Were attacks lethal and/or indiscriminate? Please elaborate.

N/A.

1D. (SBU) Have any Americans been killed or injured in these attacks?

N/A.

TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM

1I. Transnational Terrorist Indicators

1A. (S/NF) Are there any foreign terrorist groups that have a presence in-country? Please provide names.

None has been specifically identified.

1B. (SBU) How does Post assess this presence? Is it an operational cell? Financial cell? Support cell? Propaganda cell?

N/A.

1C. (SBU) Is the host government sympathetic to these groups?

N/A.

1D. (SBU) Are there suspect non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in country that have a relationship with any of these groups?

No suspect NGOs have been specifically identified at this time.

1E. (S/NF) Are there any ethnic or religious communities in-country that are sympathetic to these groups?

The Islamic community in South Korea is believed to provide some degree of support to foreign radical fundamentalist groups which may support international terrorism. Such support could be funded through the mosques and the Islamic community here.

1F. (S/NF) How does Post assess the level, intent, and scope of hostile intelligence services (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Serbia, Sudan, etc.) in-country relative to potential anti-American terrorist acts?

There is no indication of current hostile foreign intelligence service ties to terrorist groups posing a significant threat to U.S.G. interests in South Korea. Of the countries cited, Iran, Libya and Sudan have diplomatic missions in country. Of these three, only Iran has suspected intelligence officers in Korea. In addition to the Iranians, Libyans and Sudanese, there are 140,000 nationals from Middle-Eastern and North African countries and 8000

Pakistanis currently residing in South Korea. Most of them are factory laborers. The local police and intelligence services keep close watch over their movements and activities and have further increased this monitoring since the 9/11 terror attacks, the war in Iraq and ongoing terrorism concerns.

1G. (S/NF) How does Post assess the availability of weapons and explosives in-country or from nearby countries for hostile terrorist elements?

The NIS reports that it would be extremely difficult for foreign terror organizations in South Korea to obtain weapons of mass destruction or firearms due to close police and customs monitoring. That said, the size and nature of the Korean agriculture, construction and shipping industries contribute to the potential for terror groups to obtain or produce illicit materials.

STEPHENS